



Budget Memo Season, Continued

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, June 06, 2011



Inviting volunteers to staff some city-financed programs in San Jose's libraries would allow more libraries to stay open longer.

Last week I featured some of the budget memos I submitted to the mayor. Here are the rest that I submitted. Budget memos are only allowed to be signed by one councilmember. Doing things differently in some areas means we can spend more in other areas.

Strong Neighborhoods Program (SNI)

The Redevelopment Agency (RDA) spent \$105 million on the neighborhoods deemed to be within the SNI areas. These areas represent roughly a third of San Jose. The SNI program is another example of a program that was started with "extra money" the city had in the early 2000s. The current budget proposal allocates \$585,721 from the general fund to support a scaled-down SNI program. I propose using all of these monies for specific code enforcement issues throughout the city of San Jose. At one time the city had 19 code enforcement officers; now we have 2.5. If we use this funding for code enforcement, we could increase the number of code officers to at least eight code officers.

Boards and Commissions

The City Charter requires the City to have a Planning Commission and a Civil Service Commission. However the other 40-plus boards and commissions are not necessary. These boards and commissions

require paid staff to attend, prepare and manage them. The staff includes employees from the city clerk, city attorney, city manager, city department staff and City Hall facility staff to set up meeting rooms.

I propose eliminating all commissions and boards that are not in the Charter. Another option would be to have these 40-plus boards and commissions meet no more than two times a year, taking into consideration that if there is a time-sensitive issue and/or project that necessitates the need of a meeting, then those exceptions could be warranted. These reductions would save the city money on employee costs. This suggestion is not new. Gov. Jerry Brown has proposed the elimination of 43 state commissions and boards. The City of San Jose would be wise to follow suit.

Information Technology

Management Partners' study for the City of San Jose showed that we spend less than 1 percent of the budget on information technology while other comparable cities spend 5-7 percent on information technology. Because of this the City of San Jose, for example, currently runs on desktop software that is 10 years old. The Capital of Silicon Valley needs to do a bit better.

The City of San Jose has two phone systems. One is a VOIP system that costs approximately \$300K a year. The other system is a legacy Centrex ATT system that costs approximately \$2.1 million a year. To replace this legacy system will cost \$1 million in one-time costs. However it would generate approximately \$1 million in annual savings afterwards. There is \$600,000 in reserves for this project however \$400,000 is needed to move forward.

I would suggest allocating the first \$400,000 from the portion of the Council offices' rollovers that will be swept into general fund (as was done last year in the Mayor's budget) be allocated to this upgrade. The ongoing savings should be allocated to the Information Technology Dept to allow for the further investment of money, time and implementations of new web-based technologies that allow for residents to interact easier with city government. as we will need to do more with fewer resources.

Libraries

Eliminate all services and programs at libraries and reallocate. Use the savings to increase library hours to keep libraries open including the opening of newly constructed libraries yet to open. Libraries are in the City Charter and should be funded so that they are open for business. The additional programs are not part of the Charter. Consideration

should be given to programs that are 75 percent or more volunteer driven. (This would save \$1.2 million and allow one of the three libraries that are currently closed to open four days a week or add 2.5 hours a week to every library city wide).

The topic of increasing volunteer opportunities in our libraries should be discussed with the union to see if there is a way for volunteers to augment current library staff to allow branch libraries to stay open longer.

The City should gather pricing information regarding outsourcing a branch library or multiple branch libraries from a company such as Library Systems & Services, which has been providing library services since 1981 and currently oversees libraries throughout the United States, including in 47 cities in California and cities in Oregon, Texas, Tennessee and Kansas. The City has an obligation to San Jose residents to investigate all options to keep libraries open.

Dept. of Finance

The City should outsource payroll services the way that Cisco (70,000 employees) and most other companies have. The money saved can be used to save finance positions for other core services like the oversight of the City investment portfolio.

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